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For ESTABLISHING a
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P E R S I A N L A N G U A G E
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P R O P O S A L, &c.

THE Persian Tongue, whether considered as introductory to new discoveries in literature, or even as an object of national concern in its tendency to promote the interests which this country has lately acquired in the political, as well as the commercial affairs of Indostan ; may be deemed of sufficient importance to justify an attempt to introduce the study of it into our Seminaries of Learning.

Every nation has, besides the mere difference of Language, an Idiom, and even a mode of Sentiment peculiar to itself, varying from that of other nations

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in proportion as it is more or less connected with them. In Europe this difference is scarce perceptible; and the reason is obvious: there is not only a constant intercourse between the people of each state, but they are all professors of the same religion; the same at least in its essential principles, however diversified by the canons and ceremonies of different churches: their language and manners are either formed on the same models of the Greek and Roman masters, or derived by inheritance from the same Gothic ancestors.

The other divisions of mankind are distinguished from us, and from each other, by stronger characters. Contented with that knowledge which serves for the common purposes of life, and obstinately attached to old customs and opinions, they have continued for the most part in an uniform state for many ages, with little alteration besides what the introduction of other people by conquest has produced

duced amongst them. And even amidst the corruptions and innovations occasioned by such mixtures, it is always easy to discover in those people the traces of their primitive manners and original forms of government.

It is not unreasonable to suppose that the powers of the mind are distributed in equal perfection to the whole race of mankind, however differently cultivated and variously applied : and even from that difference in their improvements, and from that variety in their pursuits, a powerful argument may be drawn of the advantages which might be derived to every branch of knowledge, from an acquaintance with the manners, customs, and practice of the most remote nations.

In the midst of the wildest inventions of fancy which frequently darken the histories of such nations, there is perhaps as much truth to be gathered as from our own, which, though generally

adhering to probability, are, however, from national attachments, or the prejudices of faction, filled with such innumerable contradictions, that little more than the great outlines of history can be depended upon. Supposing the credit of each to stand on an equal footing, or even allowing the insufficiency of their authorities, yet by comparing the events recorded by their authors with those of our own histories which have any connection with them, many doubtful facts might be established, and others illustrated, which length of time, and the want of collateral evidence, have contributed to render obscure.

. The observance of the same customs not dictated by any apparent necessity or utility, the kind of distant analogy between the tenets and systems of opposite religions; even the similitude of words, or the turn of an idiomatical expression common to distinct and remote people, may open new lights into the general history

history of the world, and serve to corroborate the testimonies of Scripture, by leading to the first source from which the whole race of mankind derive their origin.

The speculative mind may find something even in their morality which may afford it entertainment, nor wholly without instruction. The natural partiality which we feel for our own customs is apt to inspire us with very narrow, and generally very contemptuous notions of those of other countries. There is perhaps no country in the world possessed of fewer national vices, with a larger proportion of national virtues, than our own: yet surely it will be the highest presumption to suppose that every opinion which has obtained the common assent of the narrow sphere in which we move, is necessarily founded on truth, or that every little duty which fashion has imposed is the standard of propriety. If in any such points we find men differ from ourselves, men who are affected with the same pas-

sions, susceptible of the same infirmities, and bound by the same social ties, by which nature has connected us; it will naturally lead us to suspend our opinions till we have fixed them on certain principles; and truth will never suffer by such a suspension.

By familiarizing ourselves to a general inspection of the manners of the various inhabitants of the earth; by a frequent observation of the effects which climate, habit, superstition, and other adventitious causes are capable of producing upon the minds and hearts of men; we shall accustom ourselves not only to revere their virtues, but even to view their errors with indulgence: and such an employment cannot fail to open our minds, and to inspire us with that benevolence which our religion inculcates, for the whole race of mankind; whatever part of the globe, or whatever mode of life, providence has been pleased to allot for their portion.

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The great and rapid progress which the Sciences have made in Europe, leave little room to expect any useful acquisitions from the superstitious doctrines, and exploded systems, which encumber the Learning of the rest of the world. Yet still we must give up the claim of precedence at least to the Asiatics, since from them we derive the first seeds of all the knowledge which we have carried to so much higher a degree of perfection. In Medicine, in Chemistry, in Astronomy, in Geometry, in Algebra, even in common Arithmetic, we are the pupils of the Arabians, who received their knowledge from their more eastern neighbours. We still make use of their terms, and have adopted their characters. At a time when the natives of Europe were in a state of barbarism, when our forefathers clothed themselves with skins, and lived in huts and caves, the Arts had attained a great perfection in Asia. The manufactures of silk and cotton were in common use among them; and the wonderful structures which still subsist in
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many parts of India, unimpaired by the waste of time and the violence of war, will probably endure to the latest ages as monuments of the taste and skill, in Architecture and in Mechanics, which flourished in those remote periods. Their present condition, it is true, is by no means answerable to the promise of so early a maturity, yet it is worthy our attention; and there is certainly more than sufficient to justify our search after the remains of that Wisdom which we are convinced from such proofs once reigned amongst them.

Of the eastern nations there are none with whom we have any acquaintance, the Arabians excepted, and possibly the Chinese, who have a greater variety of writings on all subjects than the Persians. There is a large collection of manuscripts in the Persian language in the University of Oxford, where (except by a few individuals) they must be considered even in a place of Learning merely as useless curiosities.

curiosities. Great additions however might, and doubtless would be made to them, were the study of that Tongue likely to become more general. In this case, the whole collection might be made subservient to the most useful purposes, by being placed under the charge of some person skilled in that Language, and capable of selecting such materials as may any way contribute to the instruction or entertainment of the world.

The Persic Language merits this distinction in many respects. The Persians have from the earliest ages been accounted a polite people, and versed in all the elegancies of life. They have books written upon all subjects: they are especially great lovers of Poetry; and many who have been conversant in their writings have been great admirers of their epistolary stile. Their histories record many events, as well of the highest antiquity, as of more modern date, which are the subjects of our own: and their language is

not only spoken in all the courts of Indostan, but is used in all their public records, in writing letters, and in the transactions of state. The great and rich possessions of the East-India company in that part of the world make it of the utmost consequence to them to have persons in their service well instructed in the Persian Language, which might easily be made a part of their education at home, and save a great deal of labour and time, which are frequently and ineffectually bestowed upon it abroad, for want of a proper method, and from the difficulty of application and retention in minds too young for voluntary restraint, and yet past that period in life when the memory is most susceptible of lasting impressions.

Upon these considerations, it is recommended that a fund be raised for the appointment of a Professor of the Persian Tongue, with a provision for an assistant to instruct young men under his direction in the Language. For this purpose it
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will be necessary that the assistant should be a native of Persia or Indostan, it being scarce possible for any other to attain the true idiom, or the exact pronunciation; which, considering it as a living Language, are of the highest importance. It will not be difficult to engage persons amply qualified for such an office for a moderate salary, and the charges of the voyage.

The introduction of this plan into the University is liable to one objection, which perhaps may be urged even by those who would be glad to see some method put in practice for the cultivation of the Persian tongue, as an useful attainment in such persons as are designed for the service of the East-India company. It may be said, that such an institution will lead the young student into other branches of learning, and engage him in pursuits foreign to the intention of his education; besides, that it will take up more of his time than he can well afford for a way of life which is usually undertaken at the age

age of sixteen or seventeen ; an age in which few are qualified even to be admitted into the University. This indeed would be the case ; but it is so far from an objection, that it is an additional argument, and a very strong one, for preferring this plan on the footing proposed, to any other in which the study of the Persian Language should be added to those common attainments which are generally supposed the only requisites for such an employment. Whilst the affairs of the East-India company were confined merely to commerce, such qualifications were sufficient, and even the knowledge of the Persian Language superfluous. But at this time, when the servants of the company exercise the rights of sovereignty over a rich and extensive country, surely something more than a bare proficiency in writing and merchants accounts ; a more liberal exercise of the understanding ; a preparatory knowledge of the principles of government, and especially of our own constitution ; some acquaintance

ance with men and manners, are necessary to enable them to fill the parts of magistrates and legislators, and to discharge the difficult offices of government, at such a distance from those from whom they derive their powers, that every little error in their conduct may be productive of dangerous and fatal consequences.

If this Proposal takes place, there is no doubt but it will meet with encouragement even from those who make this objection: since the advantages obtained by it will presently be visible, in the superiority of those who go abroad so happily endowed with accomplishments equally necessary for the advancement of their own fortunes, and the success of the public affairs.

An Addition to the above it is recommended that the young writers of the Company be allowed a competent Time for finishing their Studies at home after their Nomination to the Service, still retaining their rank upon the List, in the same manner as if they had proceeded immediately to their allotted Stations
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This is mentioned to remove an Objection
which might be made to the loss of so much
Time spent in acquiring an Accomplishment
of so little Utility in any other way of life
Were such a Qualification to be learnt pre-
viously to their Admission into the Service.

It is not the design of this little Performance
to Enter into the Minute Examination of every
Difficulty which may arise in the Execution of
the Plan here proposed. If there is reason
to believe that the Establishment itself
properly regulated and conducted will produce
the Advantages intended by it. it is hoped
that no objection will be insisted upon
the supposition of the Insufficiency of the
regulations which may be made for it. or
the Neglect or Disability of those who may
be appointed to conduct it